

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 15

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<b>Monday</b>	1 Samuel 7-9	Psalm 82	John 17
<b>Tuesday</b>	1 Samuel 10-12	Psalm 83	John 18
<b>Wednesday</b>	1 Samuel 13-15	Psalm 84	John 19
<b>Thursday</b>	1 Samuel 16-18	Psalm 85	John 20
<b>Friday</b>	1 Samuel 19-21	Psalm 86	John 21
<b>Saturday</b>	1 Samuel 22-24	Psalm 87	Acts 1

**Sunday:** *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under "Adult Education, Bible Study".*

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**The 1 Samuel readings:**

1. See the summary for week for an introduction to 1 Samuel.
2. In ch. 7 Samuel becomes a judge over Israel. His judgeship (as a prophet) is in contrast to the lawlessness during the period of the judges "when each man did as he saw right".
  - a. The prophet speaks for the LORD, who specifies what is right.
  - b. This inaugurates the change in epoch in Israel, for in ch. 8 is described the demand for a king, which in ch. 9 ripens into the selection and anointing of a king.
    - i. The king is anointed in secret, and not acclaimed publicly until 10.17-27.
      1. Saul is a Benjamite, from the "humblest house" (9.21), which humility is reflected later in the calling of David (least of Jesse's sons)(1 Sam. 16.11-13).
      2. Royal humility is reflected in Christian monarchical tradition in the fact that a king is ordained and anointed while wearing the dalmatic of a deacon (the vesture of a servant).
3. Saul's kingly charisma is demonstrated in ch. 11. The powerlessness of Israel is emphasized in the narrative.
  - a. At the third national assembly conducted by Samuel (in ch. 12), the preceding traditions of popular demand for a king and of divine initiative, are brought together. Nonetheless, the people's failure to turn to and rely on the LORD is seen as an evil.
  - b. If the king can unite Israel in fealty to the LORD, he will be blessed and succeed, and by him the people will be blessed. Saul fails at this, and David is identified as his successor.
    - i. Jonathan's defeat of a Philistine garrison (ch. 13) triggers a test of fidelity, and Saul does not obey the strict command of the LORD. He is rejected.
    - ii. What follows is narrative of the consequences of rejection (to the people).
4. The focus of the narrative shifts to David in ch. 16. Through to the middle of ch. 18, David's charisma is demonstrated, e.g., in the famous story of David and Goliath (ch. 17).
  - a. Saul has abandoned the LORD; the LORD is with David.

- i. The women's triumph song (18.6-9) reflects more the reality of the future than the present. Apprehending this, Saul seeks David's death.
  - ii. What follows is a narrative of conflicts at court. Reconciliation is effected by Jonathan, after the king has ordered his own men to kill David.
    - 1. What drives David to become a guerilla leader is the unremitting enmity of the king.
- 5. The stories of David's career as a guerilla strike a delicate balance. David is driven out of his own country into an alliance with Philistine lords.
  - a. David's remarkable success as a guerilla leader against the established king is a sign of God's favor.
  - b. The unfolding of the narrative comes about absent an active role in David. The LORD's purpose is accomplished in the events in the way that they unfold.
    - i. For example, in ch. 24 David spares Saul's life. He is not in active rebellion against the established king.

**The psalms:** *The psalm numbering and versification system used throughout these study summaries is that found in The Book of Common Prayer (1979).*

- 1. The psalms encountered this week include:
  - a. 82: A prophetic vision report comparable to Isa. 6. The theology is consistent with the pre-exilic period, given the reference to multiple "gods" (as beings subordinate to the LORD), and the later adoption of a strict monotheism.
    - i. The guilt of the "gods" is that they have not upheld justice for the powerless. This charge is a testimony to the justice and character of the LORD.
  - b. 83: A national lament provoked by the threat of invasion. The peoples referred to in vv. 6-8 (or their descendants) still surround and threaten the State of Israel today.
    - i. Vv. 9-11 call to mind the complex stories found at Judges 4-8.
  - c. 84: A song of Zion, and of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which follows a structure of: longing for the Temple; the happiness of the pilgrim; a prayer for the king; and God and His Temple as the source of blessing.
  - d. 85: A psalm difficult to classify, but probably a national lament. The psalm may be associated with the harvest festival, and so may represent a liturgy of supplication.
    - i. The past tense verb references in vv. 1-3 serve to invoke blessing in the form as God has blessed in the past.
      - 1. These references to blessing explain the traditional appointment of this psalm for use in the monastic office at Christmas.
  - e. 86: An individual lament. Probably a prayer of the king invoking protection against those who threaten him.
    - i. V. 15 is a reference to Exod. 34.6, as a credal statement. Cf. Pss. 103.8; 111.4; 145.8.
  - f. 87: A hymn of Zion. V. 2 ("Glorious things are spoken of you ..." should be understood in the sense that the LORD speaks these glorious things, *i.e.*, that He has chosen Zion.
    - i. Just as Zion is the origin of peoples, Mary is honored (as the mother of Jesus) on her feasts by the traditional appointment of this psalm.

## The Gospel readings:

1. See the summary for week 12 for an introduction to John.
2. Ch. 17 comprises Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer," in which He intercedes for believers. The "Lord's Prayer" is, properly, a model prayer for disciples to follow.
  - a. Jesus returns to His glory (17.1-5) and sends His disciples into the world (17.6-19), praying that they may be one (17.20-26).
3. The Passion narrative flows from 18.1 to 19.42.
  - a. Unlike in the synoptic gospels, there is no formal trial of Jesus. Jesus is, essentially, charged with being a "false prophet" in violation of Deut. 18.20.
  - b. The trial before Pilate focuses on the political dangers of the popularity of Jesus.
    - i. Jesus establishes that it is Pilate, in fact, who is on trial. Pilate ends with the consummate postmodern question, "What is truth?" (18.38).
      1. In a supreme irony, Pilate forces the Jewish leaders to demonstrate their disloyalty to the LORD by acclaiming Caesar as king (19.15).
  - c. The identity of Jesus is made clear when He identifies Himself as I AM to the arresting party (18.5-8). This invocation of the Holy Name (*see* Exod. 3.14) results in the arresting party falling to their faces.
4. Pilate plays the coward. He finds no fault in Jesus, and is even afraid (19.8), but he gives in to popular demand.
  - a. Jesus does not reveal the truth to Pilate, for Pilate cannot hear it as an unbeliever.
  - b. Unlike in the synoptic gospels, there is no mockery of Jesus at His crucifixion. In the Johannine portrait, Jesus is always in control. God's glory is revealed on the cross.
  - c. Whereas the other gospels involve outsiders reacting to Jesus, in John his own do so, at the foot of the cross.
  - d. When the Lord dies, His final words are "it is accomplished (finished)," *i.e.*, the work His Father has given Him to do (*cf.* Jn. 17.4).
5. All four gospels tell of women visiting the tomb on the new day.
  - a. Mary Magdalen is identified as the first visitor to the tomb, and the first person to whom the risen Lord appears. She is commissioned to take the news of His resurrection to the other disciples, and is known, therefore, in the Eastern Church as "the apostle to the apostles".
    - i. Given the fact that in the ancient world the testimony of a woman was not deemed reliable, this is not a detail that would have been invented in the construction of the story were the story fictional!
6. The story of Jesus' appearance to the disciples are uniquely Johannine (among the gospels). The tradition of Thomas is unique, and the fact that Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon the disciples is different from Luke's account of the advent of the Spirit at Pentecost.
  - a. The accounts are not in conflict. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit is poured out on all; in the upper room Jesus imparts His Spirit to the named disciples.
7. When Jesus appears to His disciples at the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Peter reverses his triple denial of Jesus, with a triple affirmation of his love.

- a. Jesus' feeding of His disciples precedes the fact that they will feed others. This is made explicit in Peter's commissioning to feed the lambs, of whom Jesus is the shepherd (21.15-19).
  - i. Jesus now declares that Peter will fulfill his earlier promise (13.37-38) to follow Him to death.
    - 1. *1 Clement* 5.4 testifies to the martyrdom of Peter under Nero. Tertullian (*Scorpiace* 15.3) testifies to Peter having been crucified.

### **The Acts of the Apostles readings:**

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*: Volume 2 of Luke, in which he describes the birth and growth of the Church. The programmatic verse in Acts is 1.8: The disciples will be Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, "and to the end of the earth". Luke focuses on the fact that *nothing* can stop the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the Church. Acts is thus organized as follows:
  - a. Introduction: preparing Jesus' followers for the Spirit (1.1-2).
  - b. Mission in Jerusalem (2.1-8.1a).
  - c. Missions in Samaria and Judea (8.1b-12.25).
  - d. Missions of Barnabas and Paul converting Gentiles; approval at Jerusalem (13.1-15.35).
  - e. Mission of Paul to the end of the earth (15.36-28.31).
2. Luke and Acts together comprise an historical and literary unity. Luke's prologues to each book set forth his purpose. In vol. 1 (Luke), the evangelist sets forth that he intends to relate the life of Jesus, not as an eyewitness, but having undertaken extensive research. In vol. 2 (Acts), he undertakes to write a history of the birth of the Church, and in this volume he does speak at times as an eyewitness.
  - a. The centerpiece of most of the great scenes in Acts is a speech which sets forth doctrine.
3. Jesus sets forth for the disciples what is to come next at 1.6-8. The rest of the book narrates how the disciples fulfill this.
  - a. Matthias is selected by lot to demonstrate that his selection is by the Lord's will.
  - b. Peter's discourse at vv. 16-22 is the first of the set speeches in Acts.
    - i. His address to the disciples as "brothers" also sets the tone for the fellowship which is the Church.